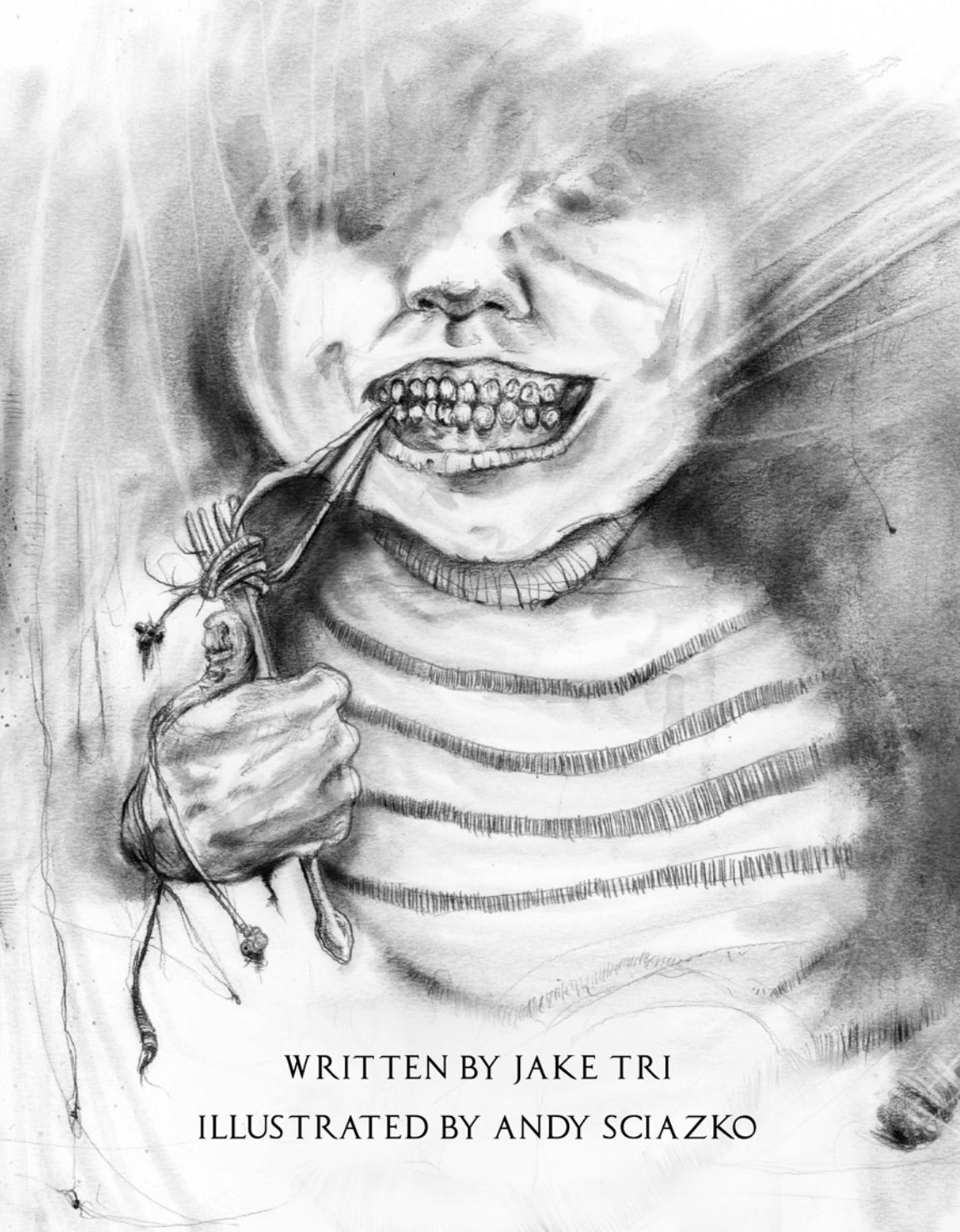


# NIGHTMARE SOUP

TALES THAT WILL TURN YOUR STOMACH



WRITTEN BY JAKE TRI

ILLUSTRATED BY ANDY SCIAZKO

# NIGHTMARE SOUP

TALES THAT WILL TURN YOUR STOMACH

---

Written by Jake Tri  
Illustrated by Andy Sciazko

Nightmare Soup: Tales That Will Turn Your Stomach  
Copyright © 2016 by Jacob Tri & Andy Sciazko

Digital Edition

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without written permission from the author.

ISBN 978-0-9983054-1-7

# NIGHTMARE SOUP





## CONTENTS

I Hate Clowns .....	9
Noodles .....	12
Full Moon Guests .....	15
The Hunt .....	18
Imaginary Friend .....	22
Strange Lights .....	26
The Woman in the Window .....	29
Bloody Mary Forever .....	31
Teeth .....	34
The Shortcut .....	37
No Swimming .....	41
Pretty Pumpkins .....	44
Hungry Cats .....	50
The Seed .....	53
Mr. Smiley .....	57
The Fly .....	60
The Creeper .....	64
Feeding Time .....	67
I Told You So .....	72
The Sloth .....	75
Zoo .....	76
Mr. Wilson .....	80
The Farm .....	84

Monsters Aren't Real .....	87
The Lonely Troll .....	89
The Tooth Fairy .....	92
Tongue .....	95
Frozen .....	98
The Pyre .....	102
The End .....	103

(Bonus Digital Add-On)

Drip, Drip.....	106
When They Come .....	109
The Rabbit.....	112
Free Pizza.....	116
The Taste.....	119

# NIGHTMARE SOUP

TALES THAT WILL TURN YOUR STOMACH



## I HATE CLOWNS

“I don’t want to go to Daniel’s house mom.” Max stood in the entryway. His mom had her keys in hand ready to leave.

“What? All of a sudden you don’t want to go to your best friend’s birthday party?”

He hesitated before answering. “There’s going to be a clown there. I hate clowns.”

“Oh honey, you’ll be fine. Just go in the other room or something. Plus, you’d probably hurt Daniel’s feelings if you didn’t show up.”

Max just stood there, unsure of what to do.

“It’s either Daniel’s party, or you can help me run errands, and they’re not fun errands. I have to go to the post office, and then I have to get a dress for your aunt’s wedding. You’re going to be bored out of your mind.”

He sighed. “Okay, fine. Take me to Daniel’s.”

When Max arrived at the party, he said hello to his friends and gave Daniel his birthday gift, but he could really only think about one thing: where was the clown?

Then, out of the corner of his eye, he saw a colorful bag and slowly walked up to it. “This must be the clown’s stuff,” he thought to himself.

He opened the bag to reveal a myriad of clown accessories, makeup, and party favors. But what really caught his attention was the big red clown nose sitting right in the middle of the bag.

He reasoned that if he took the clown’s nose maybe the clown wouldn’t come out to perform. So, he grabbed it from the bag and stuffed it in his pocket.



Sure enough, Max was correct. The clown never appeared at the party and he had a great time.

That night, while he was asleep in his bed, he awoke to the sound of laughter outside the window.

Max got up and slowly looked out to the street. There was a clown standing there on the sidewalk, a wretched, uneven smile cut across his face. In his left hand, he held the string of a single red balloon which floated ominously by his side. There was something else in his right hand, but Max couldn't tell what it was.

That's when he noticed blood running over his lips and dripping down his chin. He reached up to touch his face. His stomach dropped. He rushed to the bathroom and turned on the light... then he screamed.

Max's nose was completely gone and all that remained was a large bloody hole.

## NOODLES

“We came here to try new things,” Jimmy’s mother insisted. Jimmy looked down at the bowl of pale grey noodles. It was the second week of their trip to Cambodia and all he could think about was a big juicy cheeseburger from back home. “Just try it, you might really like it.”

He stuck his fork in the bowl and twisted a few noodles around. “Mom, what kind of noodles are these?”

“Take a bite; they say it’s a local delicacy.”

Jimmy raised the noodles to his mouth and slurped them up like spaghetti. “Wow! These are delicious!”

“See, I told you!” his mom exclaimed. “You have to be open to new types of food. You’ll never get this type of stuff back in Indiana.”

Jimmy quickly gobbled up the rest of the noodles and sat back in his chair, satisfied. Maybe his mom was right all along. He went to bed still thinking about how good the meal was, it was even better than the cheeseburger he craved.

But that night Jimmy’s stomach began to rumble and turn. His insides felt as though they were *moving*. He got up, rushed to the bathroom, and lifted his shirt, staring at himself in the mirror. What he found was a horrifying sight. Something was slithering within his gut. He rushed to his parents’ room. Whatever it was, they had it too.

A local doctor came to examine his family the next morning. After checking everyone thoroughly, the doctor asked what they had eaten.



“Noodles... just noodles from the village down the road,”  
Jimmy’s mother explained.

The doctor’s expression took a grave turn.

“What is it?” she asked. “What’s wrong?”

“Those weren’t noodles...” the doctor explained. “They were worms. They gave you tapeworm soup.”

## FULL MOON GUESTS

The radio buzzed as John and Carrie drove through the woods. They were headed to their family's cabin for a quiet weekend alone.

“Reports of three murders in the last week... (static)... killers on the loose. Residents are urged to stay indoors tonight as the police search continues.”

“You hear that?” Carrie’s voice was full of apprehension and concern.

“I wouldn’t worry about it... we’re way up in the mountains. Nobody’s going to come all the way up here.”

John continued driving until they reached the old cabin built in the 1960s.

“It’s just me and you,” John smiled. “The perfect anniversary. Plus, there’s supposed to be a full moon tonight.”

After the two unpacked their belongings, John and Carrie lit the fire place, beginning their romantic evening together. As the night set in, the two poured a glass of wine and cozied up in the family room.

Suddenly there was a knock at the front entrance.

“Who could that be?” John got up and peered out the window and then opened the door. Nobody was there.

“Hello?” he called out into the darkened woods, but no answer came. He closed the door and walked back toward Carrie, but then another hard, wooden knock echoed through the room.

John returned to the door and slowly pulled it open. Again, nobody was there. But as he started to close it, a figure emerged from the shadows and began to approach the cabin.



The figure was tall and lanky – a man – wearing a cloth sack on his head. Upon the fabric, he had drawn a hollow, grinning face. The man was soon joined by two others. All three carried large blood-stained knives. The three figures then started running toward the cabin.

“Carrie, run!”

John and Carrie rushed for the back door, but it was too late. The three men crashed through the front entrance. Two of them tackling John; the other went for Carrie.

All three laughed hysterically as they bound John and Carrie’s hands and feet.

The leader of the three men knelt down next to John and looked out the window.

*“It’s a full moon neighbor... you have to be careful what happens on a full moon.”*

The man then raised his knife, ready to strike, but to his surprise, John burst out into laughter.

*“You know... you’re right about that...”* John’s voice devolved into a heavy growl. Fangs erupted from his mouth, his skin sprouted a thick fur, and his clothes tore as a hulking monster took form.

Carrie snapped the rope that bound her, claws forming from her perfectly-painted nails.

The intruders backed away in terror as two gigantic wolf-like creatures rose in front of them. John and Carrie lumbered toward the three men, a rabid hunger blazing in their yellow eyes.

*“You see, the police aren’t searching for you three...”* John snarled. *“They’re searching for us.”*

## THE HUNT

It was the coldest November anyone could remember, and a fresh blanket of snow covered the forest floor. Kyle was immersed in the wilderness, clutching tightly to his rifle. There was something relaxing about the quiet bustling of the woods; it was easily his favorite place.

It was the heart of deer season, and this year he was going to bag a monster buck like no one had ever seen. He just knew it. But the entire day went by and Kyle hadn't seen a thing. The sun would soon be setting and he needed to start making his way back home. Kyle grabbed his gear and started walking along the path, but something seemed off. The soothing hum of forest sounds had been replaced by a cold, dead silence. Kyle couldn't even hear the wind rustling against the last of the fall leaves.

That's when he saw it.

It was the largest buck he'd ever laid his eyes on. A monster, the one he had been waiting all these years for, and it was looking right at him.

At first Kyle didn't move, but neither did the buck. It just gazed at him from 100 yards away, standing in an opening on a small hill.

He took a couple steps forward. Still the buck did not move. He took a couple more steps. Again, nothing.

As he got closer, he noticed a strangeness to the buck. It had thick black fur, and its gigantic antlers were curved in, almost like that of a large goat.

Nevertheless, Kyle wasn't going to let this opportunity pass by. He slowly raised his rifle and took aim.



The shot ripped through the forest with a thunderous echo. It was perfect - right in the heart.

But his smile soon faded; the buck barely moved. It simply cocked its head slightly and continued to stare directly into his eyes.

Kyle was in disbelief. He raised his rifle for another shot, but before he could pull the trigger, the buck started walking in Kyle's direction.

He couldn't breathe. This wasn't a deer – it was something *else*.

The creature's long ghostly strides started to quicken. Kyle's stomach knotted in fear; he had no choice but to run.

The blackness of the forest consumed him as he rushed through the bushes. He briefly looked behind him to see the silhouette of the creature quickly gaining ground. It was galloping toward him in an animalistic, yet human motion. Its hooves digging into the mud as it came closer and closer.

Kyle saw a small cabin-like structure up ahead. He sprinted as fast as he could hoping to reach it before the creature caught up to him.

He made it to the entrance and ripped open the door. He slammed it shut just before the creature could reach him.

Shaken and trembling with fear, he took a deep breath.

He slowly turned to see who or what was in the shelter he had found. It was dimly lit, with nothing but a few burning candles. Kyle grabbed one of them and took a few steps forward to get a better look.

The walls were splattered with dried blood and decorated with human heads.

The door to the shelter slowly crept open, and he turned to see the creature standing in the entrance.

Kyle dropped the candle, paralyzed with fear. The creature then raised its large gangly hoof and pointed to an empty space on the wall of heads. There was Kyle's name scratched into the wood.

## IMAGINARY FRIEND

“Mom I didn’t do it. It was Charlie!” Ethan looked over at the antique mirror that had been shattered to pieces, and then back to his mother’s scowl.

“I don’t want to hear it Ethan, how many times have I told you not to kick the soccer ball in the house... First it was your grandma’s vase, now the mirror. Do you know how old that was? It’s irreplaceable.”

“Mom, I’m telling you, it wasn’t me!”

Sharon was quickly growing impatient. “Stop lying to me. There is no Charlie. You’re too old for imaginary friends. You’re grounded for a week.”

“A week! That’s not fair!” Ethan whined.

“Go up to your room. I’ll call you down when dinner is ready. I’m telling your father when he gets home too.”

“No! Don’t tell Dad!”

“Up to your room!” Sharon grabbed a broom and started sweeping up the mess as Ethan trudged upstairs.

A half-hour later, as Sharon was preparing the dinner table, she heard a soccer ball bouncing in the living room.

“Ethan! I told you to go up to your room! And for goodness sakes, no soccer in the house!”

She stomped into the family room, but nobody was there.

“Ethan?” Sharon slowly walked up the stairs, as she could hear a conversation happening in Ethan’s room.

Sharon put her ear to Ethan’s door to listen. “I told you, Charlie, we can’t play soccer in the house anymore, you keep breaking stuff and I’m the one who gets in trouble.”



Sharon kept listening, but she didn't hear anyone talking back.

"Ethan who are you talking to?" Sharon opened the door to find Ethan staring into his closet.

"I told you, Mom. It's Charlie. He lives in my closet."

"Ethan that's ridiculous. Nobody lives in your closet. I know there aren't a lot of boys your age around here, but you're 8 years old. It's time to stop playing with fake, imaginary friends. When you do something wrong, you admit it and face the consequences. That's what grownups do."

Sharon walked back to the hallway "Dinner will be ready in five minutes."

As she closed the door, she heard a low, grumble, "*Why don't you shut your mouth Sharon.*"

Ethan's mom burst back into the room, "What did you just say young man!"

"I didn't say anything, Mom." Ethan looked up at her with worried innocence.

"You, me, and your father are going to have a long talk when he gets home."

The next day Sharon was cleaning Ethan's room while he was at school. Just as she was finishing up, she heard something move inside the closet.

Startled, she slowly walked to the closet door and turned the handle, but nothing was there. Just as she was about to turn away, something caught her eye. She crouched down to get a better look and discovered a large hole had been cut, covered by a piece of cardboard.

"What is this?" Sharon removed the cardboard and peered down into the darkness.

Suddenly a soccer ball flew out, hitting Sharon in the head and sending her stumbling back into the bedroom.

As she looked over, she saw a disfigured face peering at her from the blackness of the hole. It then started shifting back and forth, slithering forward like a snake emerging from its lair.

It was a man, horribly burned from head to toe, his skin scarred, fleshy and red. His fingernails were long and jagged as he scratched into the floorboards crawling forward.

Sharon screamed as the man lurched toward her.

*“Hello... I’m Charlie.”*

## STRANGE LIGHTS

Mike looked up to the sky as he drove along county road 135.  
“That’s just a plane.”

“That’s not a plane.” Rachel shot back. “Keep following it.”

Mike and Rachel had been on their way home from dinner when an odd light caught Rachel’s attention. They had been following it for 15 minutes and were now deep into the back roads of their small country town.

“Rachel I don’t even know where we are now; let’s just turn around and go home.”

She shook her head. “Look! It’s even lower than before. It’s headed into those woods over there.”

Mike sighed in frustration as he turned down an old gravel road. Tall evergreens now surrounded their car as they headed toward the light.

“Why are we doing this?” Mike’s eyes narrowed as he glared at Rachel.

“Don’t you want to know what it is?” Rachel’s gaze remained fixed on the object slowly moving a couple miles in front of them.

“I know what it is... it’s a plane.”

Suddenly the object disappeared, nowhere to be seen. Mike stopped the car and turned to Rachel, satisfied. “Good, now we can go home. This place creeps me out anyway.”

Then suddenly the radio started to buzz, the car’s lights flickered, and the engine died.

“What was that?” Mike looked over at Rachel. He tried to turn the car back on but it refused.



Rachel glanced up. Her shriek pierced the otherwise quiet night. In front of their car stood a pale white being, its black oval eyes shined in the moonlight. Slowly, it walked around the side toward Rachel's window.

Blue light illuminated the forest as a huge spacecraft emerged from the trees and hovered over to the car. Mike and Rachel were paralyzed. They couldn't move, and they could no longer scream. The windshield of the car cracked and exploded open as Mike and Rachel were ripped from their seats and lifted into the ship.

Three days later a group of hunters found Rachel shivering against a large pine tree, a blank, distant expression on her face. They tried to get her to explain what happened but all she could murmur was, "It's not a plane..."

## THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW

*The following is based on a true story...*

When Aunt Glenda was a little girl growing up in central Indiana, she experienced something that was utterly terrifying.

It was the middle of December. The winter chill had started to set in, and the windows glistened with fresh frost.

Glenda was snuggled up in her bed trying to get warm before falling into a blissful slumber. That's when she heard the "scratching."

She looked toward her bedroom window to see a ghostly hand scraping away at the ice with unusually long, crooked fingernails.

As the frost was shed from the glass, a woman peered into the room. She didn't say anything or make a sound. She just stood silently and stared towards the bed.

Glenda closed her eyes, hoping it was just a nightmare, but when she opened them, there was the woman, glaring at her. She was extremely skinny, almost emaciated. Her facial features were hollow and sunken. Her hair was long, stringy and black.

The woman visited Glenda every night for a week... then she left and never returned.

So when winter arrives and its icy breath starts to creep across your town, beware of the woman in the window.



## BLOODY MARY FOREVER

“That’s the dumbest thing I have ever heard!” exclaimed Kevin.

“Okay then, if it’s so dumb then why don’t you do it.” Taylor stood with his arms folded, testing his brother’s bravery.

“Fine!” Kevin marched into the bathroom and turned on the light. “Bloody Mary! Bloody Mary! Bloody Mary!” he shouted. “I’ll even say it more! Bloody Mary! Bloody Mary! Bloody Mary... Bloody Mary times INFINITY! Bloody Mary FOREVER!”

Kevin paused for a moment, gazing into the bathroom mirror. He then turned to his brother with a confident smile. “See... I told you, dumbest thing ever.”

Later that night, Kevin was sleeping in bed when he heard a strange shuffling coming from the downstairs bathroom.

“Taylor? Is that you?” Kevin slowly got out of bed and approached the sound.

He looked down the stairs at the bathroom entrance. It was much too dark to make anything out, but he thought he saw something move, the figure of a woman.

“Mom?”

Darkness obscured most of her face, but then she shifted into the moonlight. Kevin could see her long black hair, pale white skin, and a giant ghastly smile. That was definitely not his mother. She then dropped to her hands and knees and furiously crawled up the stairs.

Kevin rushed toward his bedroom, but the creature grabbed his leg and pulled him to the floor.



She hovered over him, her stringy black hair brushing against his face, saliva dripping down onto his neck.

“*Bloody Mary! Bloody Mary! Bloody Mary!*” it said in a gargled, broken voice. “*Bloody Mary Forever!*”

She then grabbed Kevin’s leg and dragged him screaming into the bathroom.



## TEETH

The dentist examined Sarah's mouth intently. He then looked up to her mother. "I've never seen anything like this... not in 25 years."

"Say Ahhh."

Sarah opened her mouth again, revealing a set of normal teeth, with three additional sets of small jagged teeth behind them.

"We need to take an x-ray to see what's really going on here."

The dentist directed Sarah into the x-ray room. There she sat and waited. The entire time she could hear the dental assistants talking in the other room.

"Oh wow, look at this girl," one of the assistants exclaimed. "She's like a shark with all these teeth... we'll have to call her Jaws!"

The other assistant continued with the insults. "She's like a human cheese grater!"

They had no idea Sarah could hear them.

Tears welled in her eyes, but they soon turned to anger.

The assistants walked into the room and started prepping Sarah for the x-ray.

"Okay Sarah, open your mouth, you need to bite down on this piece of plastic so we can get a good view of those fangs... I mean teeth."

The two men burst into laughter.

Sarah's gaze took a grim turn.

"Do you wanna know my secret, mister?"

The assistant looked confused. "Umm, sure, what is it?"

Sarah unhinged her jaw, her joints cracking as she opened her mouth as wide as she could. Five full sets of sharp, jagged canines erupted from her gums.

Sarah chomped down on the assistant's hand, eating it whole. He fell to the floor screaming in pain.

Sarah grinned, "*My smile is my best feature!*"



## THE SHORTCUT

“We’re going to be late!” Jennifer sat in the passenger seat with her arms crossed.

“I swear we’re never on time for anything. It’s almost 8:30.”

Tommy jumped in the driver seat and quickly fired up the truck. “Don’t worry, I know a shortcut. We’ll get to the party on time. And who cares if we’re 5 or 10 minutes late.”

“It’s a surprise party, Tommy. It kind of defeats the purpose if we show up after the actual surprise.”

Tommy and Jennifer headed down the road. Tommy then took an unfamiliar turn.

“We’re is this supposed shortcut?” Jennifer asked anxiously.

“Just past Joppa Road. It should cut our drive time by about 15 minutes.”

“Joppa? Seriously? That place creeps me out.”

Tommy smirked as he turned down the radio. “What’s a matter? You believe all those ridiculous stories... witches, black magic, all that nonsense?”

“It’s just a creepy place. Have you ever seen that old abandoned church? They haven’t even bothered to tear it down.”

Tommy laughed. “Okay I’ll drive by it fast.”

The couple continued driving until they came to an old road just off the interstate. The pavement had long worn away, leaving nothing but dirt.

“Are you sure about this?” Jennifer was growing increasingly uncomfortable.

“Just trust me. If you want to get to the party on time, this is our only option.”

Tommy turned onto the road. The truck’s headlights illuminated the dead oaks that framed the path like a corridor. Beyond them, an increasing blackness.

About two miles later, Tommy’s truck suddenly died.

“You’ve got to be kidding me, Tommy. Please tell me the truck didn’t just die.” Jennifer glared at her boyfriend with a mix of annoyance and fear.

“Gotcha!” Tommy laughed. “Oh you should have seen the look on your face! Priceless! I’m sorry babe, I had to.”

Jennifer scowled, “That’s not even the slightest bit funny. Please let’s just go.”

“Okay, okay... I’m sorry.” Tommy turned the keys but the ignition wouldn’t turn over. “Come on, you piece of junk!”

“I told you this isn’t funny!”

Tommy continued trying to start the truck. “No, this isn’t a joke. The truck won’t start. Just hold on. Let me pop the hood and see what’s going on. It might be the battery.”

Tommy hopped out of the truck and opened the hood.

“You know this is exactly how horror movies start right?”

Jennifer was now more angry than scared.

But Tommy didn’t respond.

“Tommy?”

Again, no response, not a sound except the wind howling through the trees. Jennifer reluctantly opened the door, stuck her head out, and peered toward the front of the truck. Tommy wasn’t there.

“Tommy please! You’re really scaring me. I’ve had enough of you messing around.” But she was met again with cold silence. She was beginning to get worried. With a deep breath, Jennifer placed her feet on the road and climbed out of the truck. She checked everywhere in the area for Tommy, but she saw no signs of him. She was sure he wouldn’t have just wondered off alone.

Jennifer continued to call Tommy’s name, but he was nowhere to be found. She reached into her pocket for her cell phone. No signal.

“Okay, stay calm, Jennifer,” she told herself. “Just stay with the truck until someone else comes along.”

Jennifer sat in the truck for a half hour, no one ever came. She was all alone.

Her only option was to walk until she found a place with a cell phone signal. With great reluctance, she left the truck and walked down the pitch-black road on her way back to the interstate.

After 20 minutes, Jennifer saw the place that creeped her out the most. The old abandoned church. She put her head down and

tried to quickly trek past it, but a glint of light from the window caught her eye.

She glared at the church. Its tattered wood panels and broken stained glass loomed in front of her.

She slowly walked up to the front gate, graffiti and other strange symbols littered the large wooden entrance.

She could hear something inside.

The rusted hinges screamed as she slowly opened the door.

The first thing Jennifer saw dropped her to her knees.

Tommy's lifeless body was roasting over a large fire as three cloaked figures prepared for a feast.

One of the figures turned to Jennifer and slowly removed the hood of its cloak. It was an old woman, her eyes sunken and black, her hair wispy and white.

She smiled at Jennifer with black rotting teeth.

*“You’re right on time, my dear. Surprise.”*

## NO SWIMMING

It was the middle of August, and the Midwestern heat was almost unbearable.

Luke wiped the sweat from his brow and took a big gulp of soda.

“I can’t take it anymore. It’s 97 degrees and feels even hotter than that. We have to go swimming or something.”

Isaac agreed. “What about that pond over by Mr. Riley’s house? It’s the closest thing around.”

Luke hesitated. “I don’t know, man. I heard he doesn’t let anyone near that pond. There’s a bunch of no trespassing signs and no swimming signs all over the property.”

“Do you have a better idea?”

“Fine, let’s go.” Luke finished his soda, and the two headed down the road.

The two took a little-known path through the woods and hopped the fence at the edge of Mr. Riley’s property.

Luke glared at the gigantic “No Swimming” sign posted next to the water’s entrance.

“Luke, let’s go,” Isaac beckoned.

The two jumped in the water. It was the perfect temperature, cool and refreshing.

Isaac floated blissfully on his back . “Ah this is exactly what we needed.”

Suddenly the two heard screaming from the edge of the water. It was Mr. Riley. He looked more terrified than angry. “Boys! Get out of the water now! Swim! Hurry!”



NO  
SWIMMING

Luke heard a loud splash about 50 feet away. A large, webbed fin was headed toward them, and giant tentacle-like whiskers protruded from the water.

“Isaac! Swim!”

The two boys kicked as hard and as fast as they possibly could, trying to reach the small dock where Mr. Riley was standing.

Luke was well ahead of Isaac. The fin grew closer and closer, and then it disappeared beneath the water.

“We’re almost there, swim faster!”

There was a loud splash and a blood curdling scream. Isaac disappeared.

Mr. Riley continued to yell. Luke was almost to the dock, his heart pumping in panic.

Mr. Riley knelt down and reached out. “Grab my hand!”

Luke extended his arm, grasping for help. Just as he grabbed onto Mr. Riley another splash erupted next to the dock.

Mr. Riley fell backwards and looked down in horror.

He was holding on to Luke’s arm, but the rest of him was gone.

## PRETTY PUMPKINS

Splat!

The baseball bat smashed through the pumpkin with ease, sending orange and yellow chunks in every direction.

“That’s a homerun.” Steve smiled in satisfaction.

It was just before midnight on Halloween. The streets were silent, and the trick or treaters had long gone home. But not Steve and his friends. They still had a few tricks to play. Every year they would meet up and cause havoc around the neighborhood, destroying mailboxes, egging houses, and tossing toilet paper all through the trees. But their favorite activity by far was to smash pumpkins.

The more time someone spent carving their pumpkin, the more Steve and his friends enjoyed disposing of it. It was a thrill to them, the same as destroying an expensive piece of art. And this year, Steve had his eyes set on the biggest prize of them all: the pumpkins of Mrs. Black.

Mrs. Black’s husband had died about 8 years ago, and ever since then people rarely saw her in public. In fact, many had forgotten what she even looked like. This of course had led to a myriad of neighborhood rumors and urban legends. People said she was a witch, that she accidentally killed her husband with black magic, and that she would lure children into her house and eat them. But these were all just stories.

The way her house looked was enough to keep most people away. It sat behind a large black gate, and its white paint had turned to a weathered, dirty grey, and many of the windows were covered in dust and grime.



But every Halloween, Mrs. Black would carve the most elaborate pumpkins anyone had ever seen. There would be tons of them lining her porch. Some took the shape of flowers, others looked like a field of stars scattered across the October sky. It was an amazing sight, and every evening people would walk by her house just to marvel at her masterpieces.

Steve and his friends never had the courage to destroy one of Mrs. Black's pumpkins, and it was almost an unwritten rule that they left them alone. But this year was different.

Steve had his eye on one right in the middle. A skull had been carved into it, but not a scary type of skull. This one had intricate patterns and symbols etched all over. It was oddly beautiful and looked almost real. It was the perfect target.

Steve and his friends walked up to the tall black gate. It stood over them as a warning.

“I don't know about this, Steve.” one of the boys whispered. “This place gives me the creeps.”

“You're not the one doing it, Gary. Just keep a look out.”

Steve quickly climbed to the top of the gate and then pulled himself up and over.

He dropped down onto Mrs. Black's property and instantly his heart started racing. There was no going back now. Steve took a few steps forward and looked in the windows. It was pitch black, almost as if there was nothing inside the house at all.

As Steve walked up to the porch, the temperature seemed to drop a few degrees. There was no moonlight this Halloween, but the flicker of the candles inside the pumpkins cast a strange orange glow over the area.

Steve looked on in amazement. There had to be about 50 of them, and each one was a work of absolute perfection. His eyes then locked onto the one he came for.

He crept onto the porch and carefully lifted it. He gazed into its warm, luminous eyes. And with a quick breath he blew the candle out. The smoke drifted from the pumpkin's mouth, almost as if its spirit had been extinguished.

Steve smiled; his mission was almost complete. But as he walked back toward the gate, he paused. An odd sensation tingled on the back of his neck, his stomach knotted, and goosebumps erupted from his skin. Someone was watching him. He could *feel* it. But when he turned around, all he saw in the windows was darkness.

Steve climbed to the top of the fence and carefully handed the pumpkin down to the others.

“I’ve got something special for this one,” he said with a grin.

Once Steve got over the fence the four boys ran back to the center of the neighborhood, where Steve pulled a glossy red object from his pocket.

“Is that an M-80?” Gary asked.

Steve smirked. “This is an M-1000. It’s way more powerful, almost like dynamite. I took it from my dad’s garage.”

Steve sat the skull pumpkin on the ground. “Okay guys, you ready?”

The three other boys looked around apprehensively.

Steve pulled his lighter out and put the flame to the fuse. It started to burn and hiss. He quickly placed the M-1000 into the mouth of the pumpkin and sprinted away.

“RUN!”

The boys scattered as fast as they could. About 10 seconds later a thunderous CRACK echoed down the block. Chunks of orange and yellow rained down in every direction.

Knowing they probably woke up the entire neighborhood, the boys just kept running until they each got home. Halloween was officially over.

The next day Gary heard a knock at the door. He walked downstairs and peeked through the window. It was the Sheriff.

Gary's stomach dropped. Someone must have seen them last night. What were his parents going to say? How much trouble was he going to be in?

Gary slowly opened the door.

"Hey Gary, sorry to bother you, but were you hanging out with Steve last night? I know you two run around together."

He hesitated. "Uh...no. I haven't seen him. I stayed home last night. Not really into the whole trick or treat thing anymore."

The Sheriff surprisingly didn't question Gary's lie.

"Okay, well if you hear from him let me know. His parents are worried sick. He didn't come home last night."

"He didn't?"

"You kids are always running off somewhere, I'm sure he'll pop up."

The Sheriff started walking back to his car. "Tell your mom and dad I said hello."

"Okay, I will." Gary shut the door and immediately went to grab his jacket.

Gary ran out the back and hopped on his bike. First he rode to where the pumpkin exploded, then to the creek, and to every spot he and Steve normally hung out. But Steve was nowhere to be found.

Gary spent all day and into the evening riding through the neighborhood thinking about where his friend could be. But when he was just about to give up, he remembered there was one more place to look.

Gary slowly rode up to Mrs. Black's house. He could barely see anything; yet again the moon was absent from the night sky. He walked up to the gate and looked across the front yard to the line of pumpkins still sitting on the porch.

Only one of them was illuminated. The flame of the candle danced from behind its jagged, hollowed-out facial features. But this pumpkin looked... different.

Gary strained his eyes, trying to peer through the darkness, and that's when he realized it wasn't a pumpkin at all.

It was Steve's head, sitting in the same spot as the pumpkin they stole the night before.

## HUNGRY CATS

“Cats are way better than dogs,” Jasmine said as she played with one of the kittens at the local animal shelter.

“No they’re not,” Emma quickly shot back. A small puppy was playfully biting at her hand.

“Cats are easier to take care of. They’re cleaner. They’re more independent. Dogs are almost like little children. It’s just too much responsibility.”

Jasmine started laughing as the kitten rolled on its back and pawed at her sleeve.

“Plus look at how cute they are! I think I’m going to adopt this one.”

Emma put the puppy back in its cage.

“Yeah well have you heard that cats eat their owners?”

Jasmine scowled. “What? That’s ridiculous. They do not.”

“You didn’t hear that story?” Emma walked over and gazed down at all the cats looking at her from behind their cages.

“A few months back an old lady had a heart attack in her kitchen and died right there on the floor. About a week later, her son came to visit and when he opened the door, he was horrified to find her three cats feeding on her corpse. True story. I promise.”

Jasmine rolled her eyes, “I don’t believe it. Look at this cute little face. He would never do that. I think I’m going to name him Winston.”

Emma shrugged. “Okay, I’m just letting you know what I heard.”



Later that night, Jasmine was playing with Winston upstairs and introducing him to her other cat, Francis. They were getting along perfectly.

“Okay you two, time for dinner.”

Jasmine started toward the stairs, but just as she stepped down, Francis brushed against her leg and she tripped.

She screamed as she violently tumbled down the stairs. Her head cracked against the last step, gashing open her forehead and knocking her out cold.

Jasmine was unconscious for two whole days.

She finally awoke to the sound of purring next to her ear.

Her eyes slowly opened. Francis was licking the dried blood from her forehead wound. She then looked down to her hand. Winston has nibbling on her ring finger. Her thumb and pinky had been eaten down to the bone.

## THE SEED

“This is the most delicious fruit I’ve ever eaten. What is it?” Blue juice erupted from the fruit’s skin as Zoey took another bite.

“I’m not sure.” Olivia grabbed one from the box they came in and examined it closely. “My mom sent them to me,” she said, “they’re from somewhere near the Congo River. I forgot the exact place.”

Zoey took another juice filled bite. “Your mom has the coolest job ever, traveling around the world doing medical research, seeing new places, eating new foods.”

“Yeah, I just wish she was home more often.”

Suddenly Zoey started to cough violently.

“Are you okay?” Olivia quickly filled a glass of water and handed it to Zoey.

“Yeah... I’m fine. It just went down the wrong pipe.” Zoey’s coughing subsided and was replaced with a slight chuckle. “I ate that fruit so fast I think I inhaled the big seed in the middle.”

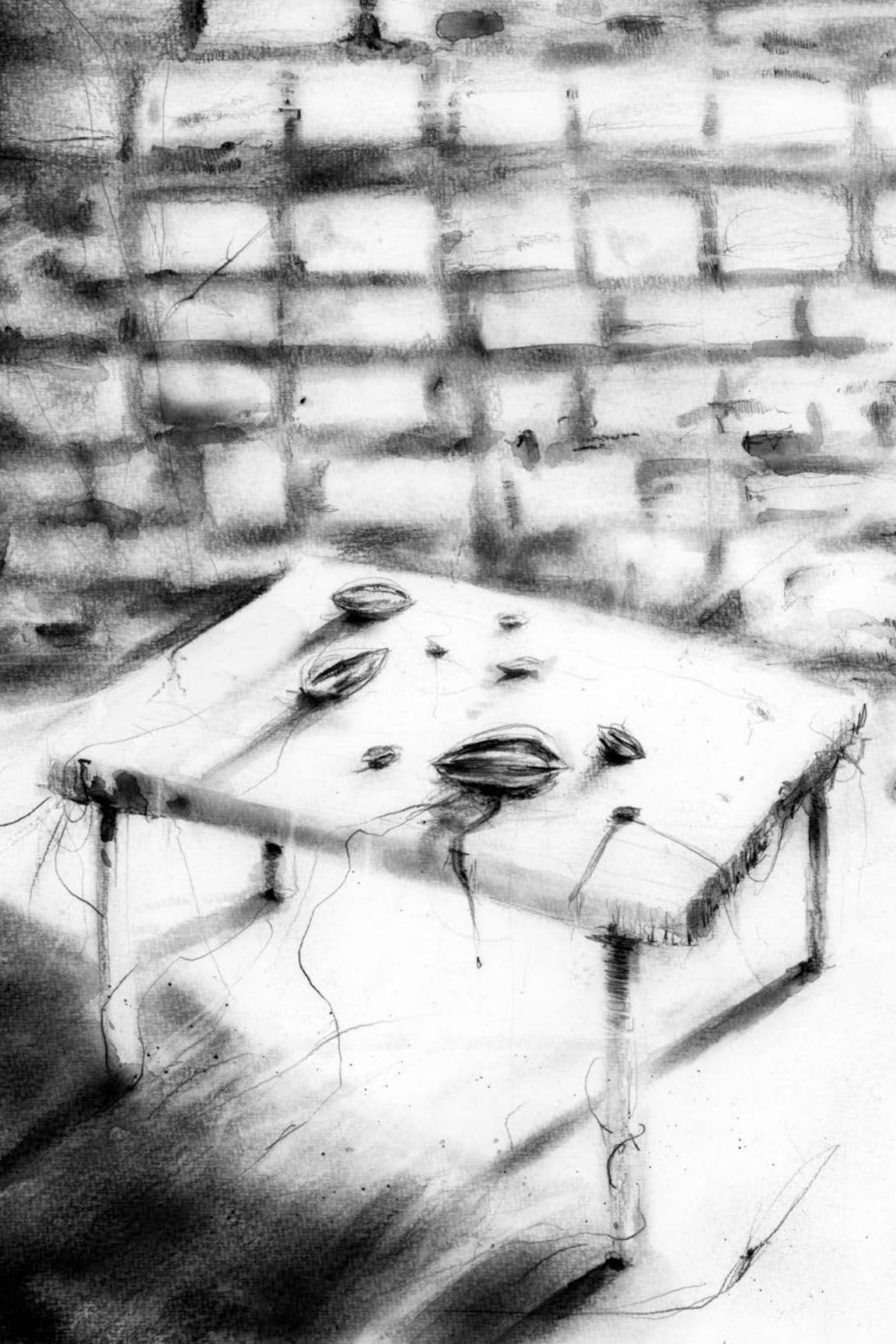
The next day Olivia was sitting on the couch watching TV when her cell phone started ringing. The number came up as “Unknown,” so she ignored it.

About two minutes later her phone started buzzing, and again, it came up as “Unknown.” Still, she ignored it.

A voicemail notification soon popped up, so Olivia pressed it and put the phone to her ear.

The voice on the recording was frantic, fearful, but it was definitely her mom. Olivia had never heard her this panicked.

“Olivia it’s your mom. I’m calling from a hospital. Do not eat that fruit I sent you! Please answer. Again, DO NOT eat the fruit.



If you did, go immediately to the emergency room! Don't waste any time!"

Olivia almost dropped the phone. She hadn't tried the fruit yet, but Zoey had. Her friend had basically swallowed one whole.

She dialed Zoey's number. No answer.

Olivia quickly fired off a text message, "Please Zoey, call me back. It's an emergency."

She tried to call again. Still no answer.

Olivia rushed out the front door and sprinted toward Zoey's house. Her lungs burned as she ran, hoping her friend was okay.

When she reached Zoey's house, she burst into the entryway yelling Zoey's name.

"Zoey! Are you here?"

She ran up the stairs. "Zoey!"

Olivia ripped open the door to her bedroom.

Zoey was sitting on the bed casually looking at her computer, a pair of headphones pressed against her ears.

Olivia pulled them off. "Zoey! Are you okay?"

Zoey looked incredibly confused. "Uh yeah, what's going on?"

Olivia put her hands on her knees, trying to catch her breath.

"My mom... she said there was something wrong with the fruit you ate... you need to go to the hospital right now."

"I feel absolutely fine."

"Let's go to the doctor anyway. Just in case. My mom sounded extremely worried."

Zoey shut her laptop and stood up from the bed. "Okay, I guess I'll go."

As Zoey turned to grab her jacket, Olivia noticed something on the side of her friend's neck.

"Zoey what is that?"

"What?"

“That thing on your neck.”

Zoey walked over to the mirror. A large blueish boil was protruding from her skin.

Zoey screamed, “What is that!”

She slowly raised her hand and touched it with her index finger. The boil suddenly popped, making a disgusting gurgle.

Zoey then passed out and dropped to the floor.

Olivia rushed to her friend’s side, she looked down at her neck. A small green vine had sprouted from under her skin.

Olivia tried to wake Zoey up, but as she shook her, she heard more of those disgusting gurgles. She brushed back Zoey’s hair to see nearly a hundred blue boils scattered across her shoulders and back.

Something was growing underneath Zoey’s skin and she needed to get to the hospital before it was too late.

*Author’s note: You may have heard that ingesting a seed can’t hurt you. But consider the 2010 case of a Massachusetts man who had carelessly eaten some peas. After going to the hospital several times complaining of chest pains and spurts of violent coughing, doctors eventually found a small growth inside his lungs. That growth turned out to be a small pea plant, sprouting from a pea that went down the wrong pipe. Be careful what you eat.*

## MR. SMILEY

It was just after 2 AM. Emily lowered her coffee cup and casually glanced out the window. She paused, then squinted her eyes trying to get a better look. “Do you see that man across the street?”

Her friend Hannah took another bite of her cheeseburger and looked over. All she saw was the glow of a lone street light in front of the 24-hour diner they were in. “What man? I don’t see anyone.”

Emily’s eyes were fixated on the road. “You don’t see the man out there? He’s wearing a yellow suit. You can’t really miss him.”

Hannah smirked. “Emily, there’s nobody out there. I promise.”

Emily looked back outside. Her eyes widened. “Hannah the man is *right* there. He’s under the street light now. He’s holding flowers or something in his hand!”

Hannah rolled her eyes, “Is this a joke? There is definitely *not* a man outside. Stop trying to scare me.”

Emily stood up. “I’m not trying to scare you!” She rushed over to the waitress standing next to the cash register.

“Ma’am, do you see a man standing outside. He’s in a yellow suit and holding flowers?”

The confused waitress looked over Emily’s shoulder towards the window. “I don’t see anyone hun.”

Emily turned around. The man was standing just outside the window glaring right at her. He was holding a bouquet of dead, yellowish tulips. His mouth was twisted into a hideous grin. “He’s right outside the window! How can you not see him!”

Emily started to tremble as tears welled in her eyes.



Hannah got up and grabbed her shoulders. “Emily! Calm down. You’re being delusional. What is wrong with you?”

Emily, shaking with fear, looked over Hannah’s shoulder and nearly fell to the floor. “Hannah! He’s inside the diner!”

Emily grabbed Hannah’s arm and pulled her towards the door. As she rushed outside she heard Hannah drop to the ground behind her.

Emily turned around to see Hannah’s lifeless body lying on the pavement. In her hand was a bouquet of dead, yellow tulips.

## THE FLY

Mr. Anderson lifted a large display of dead insects onto his desk and pointed to the lower right hand corner. His 7th grade science class loved his demonstrations.

“This one is called a botfly,” he began, “and it’s one of the nastiest insects on Earth. At least in my opinion.”

Logan leaned forward to get a better look. “It looks like a normal fly to me, just a bit bigger.”

His friend Drew was equally unimpressed. “Yeah what’s the big deal?”

Mr. Anderson smiled. “Well boys, do you really want to know?”

Logan and Drew nodded together.

“Botfly larvae are parasites. And this particular species loves humans. See, the female deposits the eggs directly onto the skin, or in some cases, attaches them to a mosquito or tick for an even nastier delivery. Once the larvae hatch, they immediately start burrowing deep into the flesh, where they continue to feed on you from the inside.”

The thought alone turned Logan’s stomach. “That is absolutely disgusting.”

Mr. Anderson laughed. “You’re right. Now imagine 50 of these things creeping around in your skin. That’s a botfly infestation, and it happens all the time.”

The mental image caused Logan to turn a pale white.

Mr. Anderson quickly realized he may have gone too far with the story. “Okay class, that’s enough about the botfly. Logan, why don’t you get a drink of water.”



For weeks after that, Logan constantly checked himself for botflies. He was terrified of the thought, and any blemish or mark that showed up on his skin caused him to fly into paranoia.

Then one morning he woke up and found a large itchy bump on his arm. He instantly thought the worst. When he got to school he showed Drew, who only teased him.

“Yep, it’s a botfly all right, just think it’s probably eating your flesh right now.”

Logan looked down at his arm. “Seriously though, what if it is? I need to find Mr. Anderson right now.”

Mr. Anderson was alone in his classroom grading papers when Logan and Drew walked in.

Without saying a word, Logan stuck his arm right in Mr. Anderson’s face.

“Logan, for the last time, that’s not a botfly. It’s a mosquito bite. Botflies are mainly in South America. You’ve got to quit doing this.”

Logan peered down at the red bump, “Are you sure?”

Mr. Anderson sighed. “I’m 100% positive, now get to the class you’re supposed to be in.”

As Logan and Drew walked out the door, Mr. Anderson sat back in his chair and scratched the side of his head, wondering how two kids could be so strange.

But then he felt something... odd.

Mr. Anderson immediately got up and walked to the restroom across the hall. He looked in the mirror and brushed away some of his hair to reveal a massive red lump with a bloody hole in the middle.

His fingers trembling, Mr. Anderson slightly pressed on the fleshy crater. A small wormlike larva sprouted from his skin, and then quickly disappeared.

*Author's note: Some may tell you the creatures mentioned in these stories are fictional, but I can tell you with 100% certainty that the botfly is real. So sleep tight, don't let the botflies bite.*

## THE CREEPER

Sarah quickly sat up in bed. Some strange sound had awoken her, but she couldn't quite make out what it was. She looked over at her clock. 3:33 AM.

She sat there for second, wondering if she had just imagined the noise, or if it was part of a dream. But then she heard it again: an odd scratching from near her window.

She rose in bed, trying to rationalize what it might be. Maybe a tree branch was brushing up against the glass? That had to be it. She slowly pulled open the blinds and peered outside. Nothing. She tried her best to put it out of her mind while she dozed back to sleep.

The next night, she was again woken by the scratching sound, but this time it seemed to be at her bedroom door. No way was that a tree branch. She again looked over at the clock. 3:33.

“Who’s there!” she yelled. The scratching immediately stopped as if someone - or something - was listening. Wide-eyed, Sarah lied motionless in bed, but after a while, she was finally able to fall back asleep.

On the third night, she tried to stay up, waiting to see if the noise returned. At around 2:45 AM, her eyelids became heavy. She struggled to stay awake, but soon fell asleep.

Once again the noise roused her from slumber. This time it seemed closer than ever. Was it in her room? She looked to the clock. 3:33. She then heard it again. Even closer - it was right next to her.

Movement drew her eyes to the foot of her bed, where a dark, ominous shadow was standing.



Large, empty black eyes glared at Sarah as she trembled with fear. Its nails scratched at the wooden bedpost, just like the sound she'd heard for the past three nights.

Sarah tried to scream but couldn't. The creature slowly crawled up onto her bed. With a gurgling hiss, it lunged forward and sank its teeth into her neck.

## FEEDING TIME

Dylan's leg was swinging back and forth as he waited in the car, something he did when he was incredibly nervous.

It was Friday night, and Brooke Taylor had finally agreed to go on a date with him. She was easily the prettiest girl in school and never went out with anyone.

Dylan looked over to see Brooke walking down her driveway. She looked absolutely gorgeous.

She opened the door and hopped in. "Hey! Thanks for coming to get me."

Dylan smiled nervously. "No problem at all."

Brooke shut the door and the two started down the road. "Just so you know, I have to be home before 11:30 or my parents will kill me."

Dylan glanced down at his watch. "That's perfect. It's a pretty short movie, should have you back around 11. And speaking of the movie, are you ready for this?"

Brooke smiled with excitement. "Oh my gosh I heard it's terrifying. Abbie couldn't even make it all the way through and had to leave."

Dylan laughed, trying to hide the fact he hated horror movies, but everyone had been talking about it at school, and he thought it would be the perfect date.

He was right. All through the movie Brooke was grabbing onto his arm and hiding her eyes on his shoulder during the scariest parts.

The two left the theater hand in hand. The date couldn't have gone any better.



“You wanna go get some ice cream or something?”

Brooke looked down at her phone. 10:47 PM. “I would, but I really have to get home, you don’t know how crazy my parents can be.”

Dylan thought it was worth a try, but he was happy ending the night while he was ahead.

As the two drove back to Brooke’s house, Dylan heard a low growl coming from Brooke.

She put her hand on her stomach; her face turned red with embarrassment. “Sorry, I haven’t eaten much today, my stomach is rumbling big time.”

POP!

The car swerved hard to the right and Dylan slammed on the brakes. “Well... I don’t think *that* was your stomach.”

He got out of the car and walked to the passenger side.

“It’s the tire, must of ran over a nail or something.” Dylan popped the trunk. “Don’t worry I’ll just throw on the spare.”

Brooke looked at her phone again, 11:13 PM. “Okay just hurry up, I absolutely have to be home by 11:30.”

Dylan put the tire iron on the first lug nut and twisted as hard as he could. It wouldn’t budge.

11:19 PM

Brooke was oddly panicked. “Dylan hurry please!”

Dylan finally got the lug nut off and moved on to the second, and the third.

11:26 PM

“We have to leave NOW!” Brooke screamed from the window.

Dylan finally lost his patience. “Calm down! I’m moving as fast as I can!”

A grizzled moan exploded from the passenger seat. The door swung open and Brooke dropped to the pavement, writhing in pain.

11:29 PM

Dylan rushed to her side, she was clutching onto her stomach, her legs kicking uncontrollably.

11:30 PM

Brooke went completely still, her body lying motionless on the pavement.

Dylan shook her arm. “Brooke... Brooke! Wake up!”

A horrific gurgle erupted from her stomach.

Dylan fell backwards in terror.

Suddenly Brooke’s spine violently arched and her eyes rolled back into her head.

Her arms and legs raised her body off the pavement. She started lumbering towards Dylan in a mangled, crab like walk.

Dylan pulled himself up into the passenger seat, frantically trying to get away. As he reached toward the steering wheel on the other side, a sharp pain pierced through his leg.

Dylan’s skin turned white as he looked down. Brooke’s stomach had ripped open, sprouting hundreds of razor like teeth. The mouth dug its fangs deep into Dylan’s flesh and yanked him from the car.

Brooke’s gangly body hovered over him. Her head was turned completely backward.

Her cold, dead expression locked onto his eyes as a broken, garbled voice seeped from her lips. *“I told you I had to be home at 11:30. This is why I never go on dates.”*

## I TOLD YOU SO

“Levi, that’s ridiculous.” Audrey rolled her eyes and walked down the stairs.

Her brother chased after her. “No it’s not! Have you ever seen her out during the day?

Audrey was barely paying attention to him. “She’s in the night school program.”

“Exactly! And have you ever seen anyone else at her house besides her parents?”

“She just moved to town and hasn’t made any friends yet.”

“What about her skin! It’s all pale and white!”

“So what? Maybe she’s just sensitive to the sun.”

Levi followed his sister into the kitchen. “I’m telling you Audrey, our neighbor is a vampire, and I’m going to prove it to you.”

Audrey grabbed her backpack and headed towards the door. “Well if you’re going to prove it, you better do so soon, I’m staying over at her house tomorrow night.”

Levi nearly jumped out of his skin. “You can’t do that!”

“I can and I will. See you at school.”

Later that evening, Levi decided he was going to settle this once and for all. He bought a cake from the bakery down the street and covered it with garlic. He then added an extra layer of peanut butter and chocolate icing to hide his secret ingredient.

He then cautiously walked up to the neighbor’s house and rang the doorbell.

A 17-year-old girl soon answered. She had long jet black hair, black lipstick, and black clothing from head to toe.



It contrasted sharply to her milky white skin. “Oh hey!” she said. “You’re Audrey’s little brother, right? I’m Victoria.”

Levi could barely speak, “Umm... yeah, my mom made this cake for you... as a welcome gift.”

Victoria smiled as Levi handed it to her.

“Well thank you very much! I love chocolate!” Victoria paused for a moment. “Hey, this doesn’t have anything else in it, right? Just chocolate? I have some really weird food allergies.”

Levi’s stomach dropped. “Uh, no... nothing but chocolate.”

“Okay great! Tell your sister I’ll see her tomorrow night.”

Levi started walking back towards the street, “Okay, I will.”

As soon as Victoria shut the door, Levi sprinted back to his house. He couldn’t believe his plan worked. Now all that was left to do was wait. No vampire could survive eating a cake full of garlic.

Levi sat in his room wondering what would happen, but after several hours he dozed off.

The next morning Levi awoke to the sound of crying.

He rushed downstairs to see what was wrong. Audrey was sitting on the couch with tears streaming down her face.

“What’s wrong?”

Audrey wiped her cheeks with a tissue.

“Victoria is in the hospital. They think she might die.”

Levi’s eyes widened. “Garlic poisoning?”

Audrey scowled, “What? No! Someone gave her a cake that had peanut butter in it. She’s deathly allergic to peanuts.”



## THE SLOTH

The Sloth is coming for you...

It has razors for claws, sometimes three, sometimes two.

It lives in the trees and hunts at night  
Looking for children to mangle and bite.

It may be slow, but it's deadly quiet.  
So don't go in the woods, don't even try it.

You won't hear it coming, not even a peep  
Because it doesn't run, and it doesn't leap.

It creeps from behind, stalking its prey  
It wants your flesh, your skin to flay.

When it finally grabs you, you'll pray for your mother  
Because the Sloth eats slowly, and you're going to suffer.

## ZOO

Jack hated his job.

He was an overnight security guard at the city zoo, and while he loved animals, the zoo took on a completely different persona at night. Gone were the laughing children and smiling parents. Even the bright colors of the exhibits became grey and lifeless.

As one of two security guards on duty, Jack was often lonely. Even the animals were gone, tucked back into their after-hour enclosures.

The evening started out just like any other. Jack strolled around the park, pondering whether he would quit the next day. But as Jack walked by the gorilla exhibit, a rustling sound caught his attention.

He shined his flashlight into the enclosure and saw two females sitting on a large rock.

Jack immediately grabbed his radio. “Hey Stan, I’ve got two female gorillas out here. Is Joan working with them tonight? They should be inside.”

Empty static was the only response.

“Stan, you there?”

Suddenly both females went crazy, beating their fists on the ground, screaming and hissing. Their eyes were fixated on the northeast corner of the exhibit.

Jack directed his flashlight toward that area. He thought he saw a silhouette standing there, but he couldn’t be sure.

The gorillas continued going wild, moving further and further towards the opposite corner. Jack ran along the fence to get a better look at what had them so agitated.



The glint of his security light illuminated a pair of eyes. He could barely see it, but another gorilla must have gotten free.

Again, Jack tried his radio. “Stan, come in. We have three gorillas out here.”

Finally, he received a response. “Jack, sorry about that I was taking lunch. I’ll walk inside and check the pen, it’s not the first time they’ve got out.”

“Okay, thanks Stan. I’ll keep an eye on them.”

Jack continued to stare at the gorilla bathed in shadow. He could barely see it, but something about the animal’s eyes just struck him as odd.

The radio buzzed. “Hey Jack, something’s not right.”

“What do you mean?”

“You say you have three gorillas out there right? Well there’s two back here sitting in their pen.”

“Okay, what’s wrong with that?”

There was a long pause before Stan responded. “That’s five. The zoo only has four gorillas.”

Jack snapped his gaze to the northeast corner. Whatever was standing in shadows was gone. “Hey Stan, you better get up here, we’ve got a situation.”

A couple minutes later a loud crash echoed inside the food court about a hundred yards away. Jack drew his pistol and slowly walked towards the sound.

As he turned the corner, he saw Stan’s body lying in a pool of blood.

“Stan!” Jack rushed over and gazed down. A large gash ran deep across Stan’s forehead. He was alive, but barely.

A low growl rumbled from behind Jack’s shoulder. He slowly turned to see a pair of yellow eyes glaring at him from the darkness.

The animal was deathly skinny; he could see its rib cage protruding from its skin. Its fur was patchy and uneven, and most of its teeth had rotted away, leaving a black, infected snarl.

It beat its fists into the ground and sprinted toward Jack, screeching as loud as it could.

Jack raised his gun and fired a bullet into the animal's chest, but it kept coming. Another shot into its shoulder. It still didn't slow down. The creature leapt for Jack's throat. A third shot rang out, hitting the animal in the neck. It dropped lifeless to the ground.

Jack could barely breathe, adrenaline coursing through his veins. He pulled out his phone and dialed 911.

The police arrived and the paramedics took Stan to hospital. Jack sat off to the side, he could barely believe what just happened.

One of the officers walked over to him. "You okay?"

Jack's hands were still trembling. "Yeah... I'm fine. Just a little freaked out, I've never seen an animal like that before."

The police officer looked confused. "That wasn't an animal... it was a man."

Jack's eyes widened. "What do you mean it was a man?"

The police officer put his hand on Jack's shoulder. "It was a psych ward patient that went missing about three weeks ago. He'd been living in the zoo all along."

## MR. WILSON

“He still hasn’t moved.” Jake peered over the wooden fence, looking at the brand-new baseball they had just knocked into Mr. Wilson’s yard.

Tim climbed up right next to him. “Are you sure? It’s been like 3 hours.”

“I’m telling you, he hasn’t even flinched. He just sits there staring at us.”

Old Man Wilson sat on his front porch glaring at the two boys. He wore dark glasses, a green, beat-up trucker hat, and tattered, worn overalls.

Another hour passed and Jake was growing impatient. “I’m just gonna go over there and ask for the ball.”

Tim rolled his eyes. “Come’ on Jake, you know you can’t do that. Old Man Wilson has never let anyone in his yard. You remember Matt? He went over there and never came back. Danny said he was skinned alive.”

“That’s ridiculous. Matt moved to Mooresville. Danny doesn’t know what he’s talking about.”

“Okay then, go ahead and go over there,” Tim dared.

“Fine, I will.” Jake started walking across the street, his eyes fixated on Old Man Wilson sitting in his chair. His skin was leathery, almost like wax, and his face was constantly crumpled into an angry scowl.

Jake suddenly turned around and walked back. “Let’s just wait until dark.”

Tim chuckled. “Yeah. That’s what I thought.”



A few more hours ticked away and night set in. The moon hung in the sky like a spotlight.

The two boys were still watching from across the street.

Tim squinted his eyes. “What if he’s asleep?”

Jake took a sip of soda. “What if he’s dead...”

“Okay here’s what we’re gonna do.” Jake pointed to the empty lot right next to Old Man Wilson’s property.

“He can’t watch both of us. You walk over to that empty lot, and I’ll head to very end of the fence. You start making lots of noise, and that’s when I’ll jump over and grab the baseball. Got it?”

Tim stood up. “I got it.”

“Okay let’s do this.”

Jake snuck across the street to the edge of the fence. He crouched down waiting to hear Tim yelling and making a ruckus.

“Hey Old Man Wilson! Look over here!” Tim screamed at the top of his lungs.

Jake’s heart started racing. He pulled himself over the fence and dropped down into Old Man Wilson’s backyard.

He sprinted towards the baseball lying alone in the grass. Just as his hand touched it, a loud, raspy voice ripped through the air.

*“Hey! Get out of my yard!”*

Jake slowly turned his head expecting to see Old Man Wilson standing over him, but it was an old woman.

“Mrs. Wilson?”

The old woman took a few hobbled steps forward, aided by a large wooden cane. She was standing on the porch next to Old Man Wilson, who still hadn’t moved.

*“You’ve got some nerve hopping that fence, boy.”*

Jake didn’t know how to respond. “I... uh, I just wanted to get my baseball back.”

*“Well grab it and get off my lawn.”*

Jake picked the ball up and walked towards the front gate. He took a close look at Old Man Wilson as he passed the porch.

*“Is Mr. Wilson okay? He hasn’t moved the entire day.”*

The old woman took her cane and poked Old Man Wilson in the side.

*“Who, him? He’s been dead for months. I just stuffed him and put him out here on the porch. Thought it would keep you kids off my property.”*

## THE FARM

Thunder cracked, and a bolt of lightning struck somewhere off in the distance. Earl's granddaughter, Jessie, peered through the window at the hogs trudging around in the mud. "Grandpa, did you know pigs are smarter than dogs?"

Earl put on his boots. "Do they look smarter than dogs?"

The hogs were just standing there like statues, not doing much of anything.

"Not really, but Mr. Anderson said pigs were just as intelligent as small children. They even tested them. That's why they make really good pets."

Earl chuckled. "You know what else they're good for? Bacon."

He opened the door and stepped out in the cold rain. The hogs were about a week from slaughter, and he still needed to fatten them up a bit.

He lifted the slop buckets one by one and poured them into the trough, but none of the hogs came running as they normally do. They were simply walking around and sniffing the air as if they suspected something.

"Come and eat, you dumb pigs. You've got a date with the butcher next week."

The hogs still didn't come forward.

He went to grab another bucket of slop, but as he reached down, a sharp pain shot through his left shoulder and into his chest. He dropped to his knees. Earl clutched onto the fence post and slowly pulled himself up, his body trembling. He was having a heart attack.



“Jessie! Anybody... help!” But the storm drowned out any sound he made.

He soon collapsed onto the fence and fell into the pig pen, unconscious.

After thirty minutes, Jessie started to wonder where her grandpa was. She put on her jacket and ran outside.

“Grandpa are you out here?”

The hogs were in a violent frenzy, squealing and screeching in the rain.

“Grandpa?”

Jessie looked down at one of the pigs and screamed, it was clutching a bloody, severed hand in its mouth. All that was left of Grandpa Earl was a set of white dentures lying in the mud.

## MONSTERS AREN'T REAL

Monsters aren't real.  
There's nothing under your bed.  
Not a goblin, nor the undead.

Monsters aren't real.  
There's no vampires or ghouls.  
Those stories are fake, made for fools.

Monsters aren't real.  
But you're not safe from danger.  
You could fall from a cliff, meet a murderous stranger.

Monsters aren't real.  
But people are still eaten by beasts.  
Wolves for instance, have had many human feasts.

Monsters aren't real.  
But eventually everyone dies.  
Maybe tomorrow, it's always a surprise.



## THE LONELY TROLL

Once upon a time there was a troll who lived under a bridge, which shouldn't be surprising, as all trolls live under some type of bridge.

All day and all night, the troll would wait for people to come his way, and then like clockwork, he would pop out and devour them. He didn't even ask a riddle like most trolls do. He just skipped right to the eating part.

Week after week, year after year, it went on like this. And while the troll loved the taste of human flesh, he couldn't fight the fact that he was lonely and depressed.

Then one day the troll saw a little boy walking toward the bridge. He rolled his eyes and started climbing up. He wasn't even hungry.

The troll jumped in front of the little boy and unleashed a thunderous roar, but the boy didn't even flinch.

“Wait, you’re not scared of me?”

The boy shrugged. “Not really. You’re just a troll.”

The troll looked around. Was this some type of joke, or worse, a trap by the villagers?

“You know I eat humans, right?”

“Don’t you get tired of eating the same thing every day?” the boy asked.

The troll paused. “Come to think of it, you’re right! I never try anything new.”

The boy opened his leather satchel and pulled out a freshly baked blueberry muffin.



He handed it over, and the troll popped it into his mouth.

“This is the most delicious thing I’ve ever tasted. It’s even better than that fat man who accidentally fell in a tub of butter!”

The boy handed the troll another muffin. “I can bring you more if you’d like.”

“Yes! Please do!”

Every day after that the boy would bring the troll fresh muffins. They would sit and talk, and play games. They became great friends.

Then one day the boy arrived and the troll greeted him at the edge of the bridge.

“Any muffins today?”

The boy shook his head, “Unfortunately, no. The baker is sick. But I’ll bring you some extra muffins tomorrow.”

The troll was incredibly disappointed as his stomach was rumbling with hunger. So, he ate the boy. After all, he’s a troll. What did you expect him to do?

## THE TOOTH FAIRY

Jenna was watching TV when her 7-year-old son rushed to her side.

“Look Mom!” One of Brady’s front teeth was lying in his palm.

Jenna smiled. “Looks like the Tooth Fairy is coming to visit tonight!”

Brady’s eyes lit up. He immediately rushed upstairs and placed the tooth under his pillow.

Jenna soon followed, ready to tuck him into bed.

“Mom, what does the Tooth Fairy do with all the teeth she collects?”

“You know, that’s a good question. I’m not sure. Maybe she builds houses with them or something.”

“Ew, that’s kind of gross.”

Jenna laughed. “Yeah, I guess that would be gross wouldn’t it... Okay, you better get to sleep if you want her to show up. That’s a big tooth, you might get something special.”

The next morning Brady ran into Jenna’s room.

“Mom! Wake up!” He shook her arm until her eyes opened. “Look what the Tooth Fairy gave me.” Brady was holding a large gold coin.

Jenna quickly sat up. She certainly didn’t put that under his pillow. “Where did you get that?”

Brady smiled. “I told you! The Tooth Fairy gave it to me. She said I have special teeth and she wants more of them.”

“She talked to you?”

“Yeah, I told her to come back tonight.”



Jenna snatched the coin from Brady's hand. "Brady, seriously, where did you get this?"

"I just told you, the Tooth Fairy."

"You know it's not right to make up lies."

Brady took the coin back. "I'm not lying, I'll show you tonight when she brings me another coin."

Later that evening, when Brady was asleep, Jenna thought she heard something coming from his room. She muted the TV and could clearly hear a strange buzzing, like that of a hornet or wasp, only much louder. Jenna walked up the stairs. The sound intensified with each step she took. But by the time she reached Brady's room, it had stopped.

She opened the door. Brady was sleeping peacefully. Jenna laughed to herself. "Tooth Fairy... yeah right."

The next morning Jenna was again shaken awake by her son. "Mom! Look at this!"

Brady was holding a small leather bag filled to the brim with coins. "I'm rich!"

But as Jenna sat up, her lip started to quiver. The metallic taste of blood was immediate and jolting. Her trembling hand reached up to her mouth. All her teeth had been ripped out.

Brady poured the coins onto the bed, "The Tooth Fairy changed her mind. She said she wanted your teeth instead."

## TONGUE

“Hey you wanna see something gross?” Logan pushed his science book over to Drew and pointed to the picture. It depicted a tuna fish with a disgusting, yellowish creature clamped to its tongue, like a mix between a cockroach and a crab.

Drew cringed. “What is that?”

“It’s a tongue-eating louse. It’s a parasite that crawls in the mouth of a fish, devours the tongue, then stays there, acting as a new tongue.”

Drew shut the book. “That’s the most disgusting thing I’ve ever heard.”

Logan opened the book again. “I think it’s cool.”

“Yeah well ever since Mr. Anderson told us about the botfly, you’ve been obsessed with stuff like that.”

Logan laughed, “I just think it’s interesting how disgusting nature can be.”

The bell rang and the two boys walked into the hallway.

“Speaking of fish,” Logan began, “you wanna sneak back to Mr. Riley’s pond tonight and toss out a few lines? I heard there’s some monster catfish in there.”

Drew didn’t have anything better going on, so he agreed.

Later that night, the boys were sitting by the edge of the water, both holding fishing poles.

Logan sat back and yawned when suddenly a June bug flew into his mouth. “Ah yuck!” He spit and coughed. “I hate those things. Always flying in everyone’s face and getting in everyone’s business.”

Logan walked down to the bank.



Drew started reeling in his line. “You’re not going to wash your mouth out with pond water are you? That’s gross.”

“I don’t care! I think I have a bug leg stuck in my teeth.”

Logan knelt down and started cupping water into his mouth and spitting it out.

Drew cast his line out again and looked up to the moon. “You ever hear that rumor about two kids drowning in this pond awhile back? I wonder if that’s true.”

Logan started violently coughing and gagging.

“Hey, are you okay!?”

No answer.

“Logan, you all right, man?”

Logan started crawling back towards Drew.

“Mmmm....mmmyy...tttnnnnnnggg!”

“What?”

“Mmmmmmyy... ta..ta... tnnnnnggg!

“I can’t tell what you’re saying!”

“Myyyyy tooonggguuue!”

Logan crawled into the moonlight next to Drew and opened his blood-filled mouth. A crab-like creature was inside. It hissed and screeched, and then continued to eat what was left of Logan’s tongue.

*Authors note: Cymothoa Exigua, that’s the official name of the tongue-eating louse, and it is very real. If you want to sleep tonight, I don’t suggest looking it up on the internet.*

## FROZEN

Beth looked up in the rear-view mirror. “You know, if you keep making faces like that, it’ll get stuck that way.”

Austin continued to contort his mouth and eyes as other drivers passed by. “Mom, I know that’s not true.”

“Well you’re going to scare somebody and cause a wreck.”

Austin finally sat back in the seat.

But a few minutes later an old woman was driving next to them and Austin couldn’t help himself.

He smooshed his nose against the window, opened his eyes as wide as possible, and pulled his lips back so his teeth looked extra big.

The old lady looked over. The sight of his face caused her to swerve right into the car. The impact tossed him back into his seat. Austin’s mom tried her best to keep the car straight, but it glided into the next lane. Austin peered out the window just in time to see a pickup truck careening toward him. The last thing he remembered was the sound of twisting metal, shattered glass and screeching tires...

Austin woke up to nothing but black. He had bandages on his eyes, and could hear nurses and doctors working in the background.

“Austin can you hear me?”

“Mom?”

“You’re in the hospital, honey. You’ve been out for a couple days.”

Austin tried to remove the bandages from his eyes, but his mom stopped him.



“You need to keep those on. The doctor will remove them.”

“Are you okay, Mom?”

“Yes, I’m fine, just fractured my hand.”

The doctor walked in and put a hand on Austin’s shoulder.

“Hey, Austin, I’m Dr. Carter. You had quite the accident.” Dr. Carter pulled a stool next to Austin’s bed and sat down. “We had to put you in a coma for a few days and let the swelling go down in your brain. But it looks like you’re doing just fine now.”

The doctor started removing the bandages from Austin’s head. “I have to prepare you, son, you arrived in pretty bad shape. There’s going to be some - changes - that you’re probably not going to like.

Austin started shifting nervously in the bed. “Changes? What do you mean?”

The doctor slowly unraveled the bandages from Austin’s eyes. “We’re going to do everything we can to make you look normal again.”

As the bandages fell to the floor, he looked to Dr. Carter, and then to the mirror next to the bed. His nose was smashed to the side, his eyes bulged from his head, and his lips were peeled back, causing a permanent, ghastly smile.

It was the exact same expression he was making before the wreck, and now his face was frozen that way.

## THE PYRE

They say you can smell it before it comes, the putrid scent of burning flesh. Some say it's a man. Others claim it's a demon, or a ghost.

The call it, "The Pyre."

There are thousands of unexplained fires that occur around the world. House fires, wild fires, infernos that seemingly start from nothing. But its victims know the truth; they're started by the Pyre.

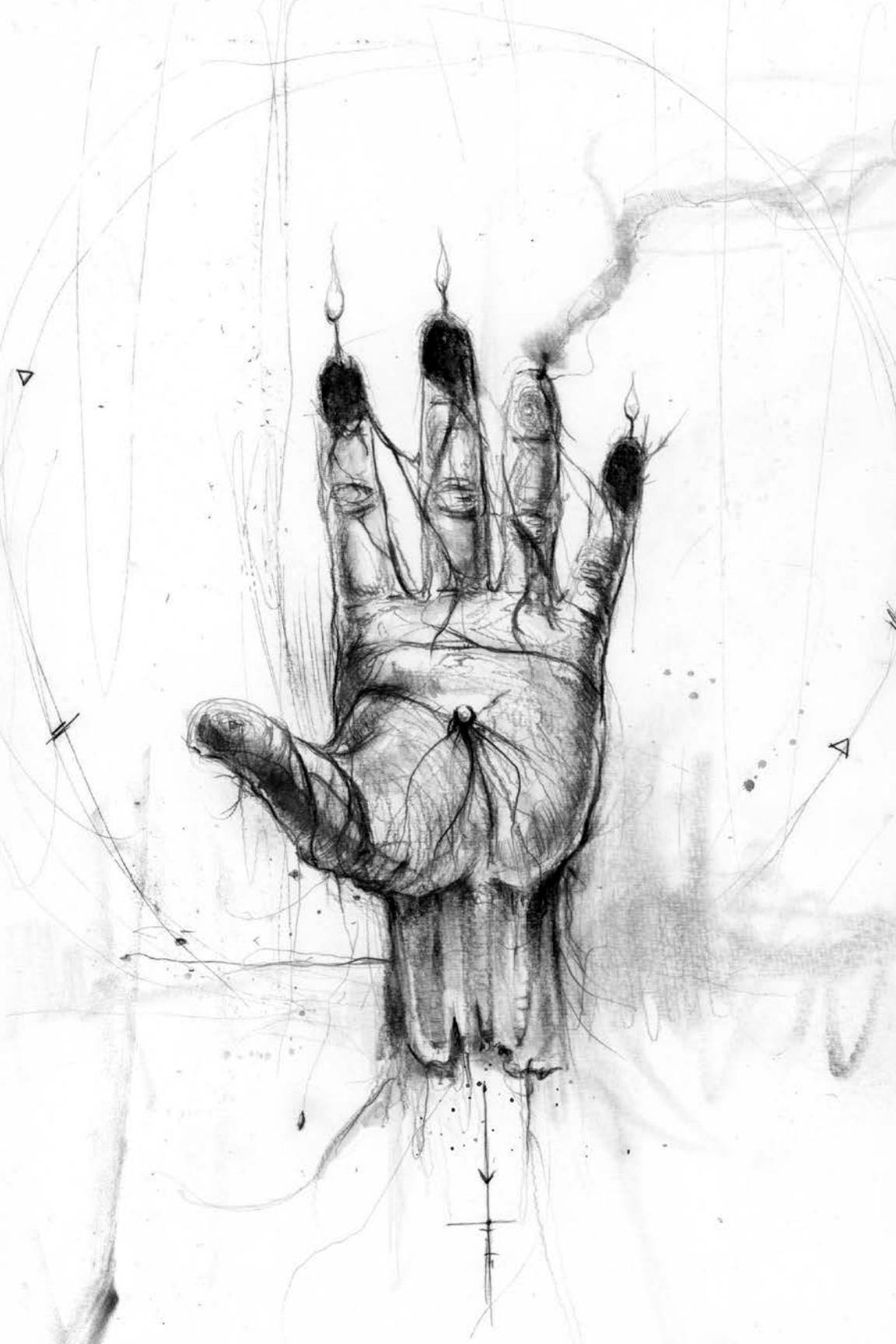
Those who have survived its wrath often tell the tale. The creature is tall, lanky, and black, its skin completely charred. It doesn't have eyes, or a nose, or even lips, just a mouth filled with perfect, human-like teeth.

The Pyre won't appear until the flames start to lick your skin. Then, just as your flesh starts to blacken and boil, the Pyre descends from the smoke. It likes to watch. It likes to hear your screams as you burn.

It waits until you are perfectly cooked to eat you. Then it crawls up to your burning corpse like a spider. It opens its mouth, unhinges its jaw, and starts to swallow you whole.

When it's done feasting, it regurgitates the teeth and bone, which is often the only thing left for firefighters or the police to identify.

So next time you see smoke in the distance, or see a fire engine rushing past you with its siren blaring, just remember, the Pyre isn't far away.



## THE END

It can't be stopped, you cannot hide.  
It has no emotion, no feelings inside.

Some call it The Reaper, The Man in Black.  
Once you meet it, there's no coming back.

It never loses, it's always the winner.  
It comes for everyone, the angel, the sinner.

It will put you in the ground, six feet deep.  
Your family, your friends, will gather and weep.

The worms and the maggots, they certainly approve.  
They devour your flesh, through your bowels they move.

But don't be afraid, or cause anger and strife.  
For each day is special. Smile. Enjoy your life.



# NIGHTMARE SOUP

TALES THAT WILL TURN YOUR STOMACH

BONUS DIGITAL ADD ON

## DRIP DRIP

When Adam and Alexa got to the movie theater, they found that they were the only two people in a room full of empty seats. “Great!” they thought, “A whole movie just to ourselves.” They sat down in the middle row, right in the center.

The lights dimmed, and they braced themselves for a classic slasher film. After about 20 minutes, a man entered the theater. He stopped along the bottom row and scanned the seats as if they were all taken. He slowly ascended the stairs and sat right next to Alexa. She glanced over at Adam, who gave her an uneasy look.

The man was heavier set, wore a black windbreaker jacket, and reeked of cigarettes. As the movie went on, whenever the killer was on screen or someone was murdered, the man went hysterical, wheezing between laughs.

Adam leaned over Alexa and asked if the man could please keep it down. But the man went on laughing and said, “All that blood dripping down from the body, I love it!”

“Let’s move somewhere else,” Alexa whispered, but Adam instead leaned over again. “Look buddy, you gotta be quiet, you’re ruining the movie.”

Once again, the man ignored them. “It’s mesmerizing.” he said. “A slow drip, drip, drip” The man continued making the sound with his mouth. “Drip, drip, drip.”

“Let’s get out of here. This guy is creeping me out.” Alexa said, and the two got up to leave.



The man's dripping sound sped up as they passed him, but slowed by the time they got to the bottom row and exited the theater. Alexa flagged down an employee and complained. The three of them headed back to the theater and found the man, still making the same sound. But when the theater employee shined his flashlight on him, Alexa screamed. The man's throat had been slit, and the slow dripping sound was his own blood as it fell to the floor. Although the wound looked fresh, there wasn't a knife to be found.

## WHEN THEY COME

“Desiree, stop messing with the channels!” Nathan yelled. He and his little sister were staying at their grandparents for the weekend, and Desiree kept fiddling with their antique television set.

“The antenna is only picking up static,” she replied.

“Well, it’s giving me a headache!” Nathan threw her stuffed bear at her.

“Nana!” She screamed.

Their grandmother stormed into the room. “Ok you two, time for bed!”

They both ran to the guest room and soon fell asleep. At around 2 am, the clock radio turned on and woke up Nathan. As soon as his eyes opened, his head filled with excruciating pain.

“Desiree, shut that off!” he demanded.

But he soon discovered he was alone in the room. Nathan sat up and shut the radio off, thinking his sister was playing a trick. He got out of bed and checked the hallway, but no one was there.

Maybe she went to Nana and Papa’s room, he thought, and crept down the hall to check.

The room was empty, but he did find Desiree’s pajamas folded neatly on the bed. Nathan got worried and searched the entire house. When he finally made it to the garage, he noticed some boxes moved away from a wall, exposing a door he’d never known was there. Shuffling past, he saw what looked like a wig attached to a leathery cape stuffed in one of the boxes. The doorway led to a long hall, the walls littered with newspaper clippings, blueprints, and photocopies of UFOs and alien encounters.



When Nathan got to the end of the hall, he found himself in a makeshift operating room. Nana and Papa were there dressed in lab coats, standing over an unconscious Desiree.

“What are you doing?” Nathan shouted.

Only Nana looked up. “She’ll be better soon.”

“What is going on?” Nathan screamed.

Papa picked up a long blade. “It’s for her own good,” he said.

“When they come, they’ll take us over with their telepathic powers.”

“And you can’t mind control a machine,” Nana added.

Nathan looked around for a weapon and reached for an empty glass on the shelf next to the entrance. “This is insane! Let her go!”

Papa glanced up at Nathan and backed away from the table. He reached into his lab coat and produced a remote control. “Nana mentioned the radio waves were interfering with your antenna,” he said, clicking down on the remote.

Radio static blared through the built-in speakers on the ceiling. Nathan collapsed to his knees as a shooting pain took over his head. “This...isn’t possible,” he cried.

“We saved all your parts from before your operation,” Nana said. “We have them in boxes in the garage.”

The static grew louder, and the screaming pain in Nathan’s head increased. He opened his eyes to see the glass he was holding shattered on the floor. He had a large cut on his hand, but instead of blood, black oil seeped from the wound.

## THE RABBIT

Sami loved rabbits. Every time her mom drove to town, she would ask to stop at the pet store. “Please!” she would beg. “Just for a minute, Mom!”

Her mother would usually take her in, but would always remind her that she wasn’t old enough to care for an animal yet. “Next year, honey,” she’d say.

One Sunday afternoon, Sami came across a white rabbit in her backyard. She yelled for her mother. “Mom, can we keep it? It looks lost!”

“I don’t know Sami,” she said. “It might belong to someone. It doesn’t look wild, so how about we take it inside and give it some food. It can spend the night, and in the morning we’ll post flyers around the neighborhood to find the owner.”

Sami enthusiastically agreed, and helped her mom build a nest for the rabbit inside a cardboard box.

That night, Sami snuck out of bed and took the box from the living room back to her bedroom. “I don’t want to give you back,” she told the rabbit. “After my mom hangs up flyers tomorrow, I’m going to ride my bike around and tear every last one of them down.”

The rabbit looked up at her with its deep red eyes. “She knows,” it spoke. Sami looked down in complete shock. “Five houses away,” it said, “in a long black dress.”

Sami ran to her window and peered down the street. There was a figure standing in the middle of the road. It was wearing what looked like a tattered black dress, and it coldly stared at her.



The rabbit began to whistle a tune. Sami turned back to see its red eyes glowing in the dark.

“At the end of the driveway,” the rabbit said. “And she’ll wave three times.”

When Sami looked out her window, the figure had moved from the end of her street to the driveway. It looked up at her and waved three times. She could see its featureless face, like the skin was pulled back tightly underneath its brimmed hat. It didn’t look like a woman or a man.

“Make it stop!” Sami pleaded. “Make it go away!”

The rabbit began to whistle again, louder than the last time. Sami ran to lock her bedroom door. When she returned to the window, the figure was gone.

“The front door is locked,” said the rabbit, “but she’ll still come in.”

Sami heard the handle of the front door jiggle back and forth, and then open and close.

“I promise I won’t tear down the flyers tomorrow,” she cried to the rabbit. “Please, make it leave!”

The rabbit started running in circles around its box, knocking over the food bowl. It was whistling again, louder than ever. Sami jumped into her bed, scared out of her wits.

“She’s going to knock three times,” said the rabbit, and from outside her bedroom door, Sami heard three wooden knocks.

“Your bedroom door is locked,” said the rabbit, “but she’ll still come in.”

Sami was so terrified that when she tried to call out for her mother, only a whisper came from her mouth. The rabbit was still running in circles around its box and whistling the same tune at an ear-piercing decibel. The bedroom doorknob began to twist back and forth.

Sami, paralyzed with fear, watched the lock finally give and the door slowly open. The faceless woman crept into her room. It extended its arm, reaching for the rabbit. Sami finally forced out a scream.

“Mom!”

Her mother rushed to her bedroom and turned on the lights. Sami’s hair had turned perfectly white, and the rabbit was gone.

## FREE PIZZA

“We interrupt this broadcast to bring you breaking news.”

Tommy looked up from his homework to the TV.

“Seemingly overnight, a restaurant chain called Pluto’s Pizza has popped up in thousands of towns across America. Citizens cannot remember the construction of these restaurants, and even more amazingly, Pluto’s Pizza is offering unlimited free pizza for an entire week.”

“Awesome!” Tommy tossed his pencil onto the table and grabbed his jacket.

He hopped on his bike and rode into town. Along the way, hundreds of other people joined him, all making their way to the brand-new Pluto’s Pizza located next to city hall.

He saw his friend Andy on the other side of the street. “Hey Andy, can you believe this? Unlimited free pizza?”

“I know! I wonder if it’s any good.”

When the two arrived, the line was nearly a quarter mile long. People were walking out of the restaurant with truckloads of pizza boxes.

The boys waited and waited, and when they finally arrived at the door, they were surprised to find there were no employees, no seats, no kitchen, just a massive room filled to the ceiling with pizzas of every topping and flavor.

Andy stacked eight in his arms; he couldn’t ride home with any more. When he got back to his house, he sat the boxes on the table and opened the one on top. It was his favorite, plain cheese.

He took a bite. It was the most delicious pizza he had ever tasted. He stuffed his face until he could barely move.

He trudged over to the couch, plopped down, and soon drifted to sleep.

Bwwwoooooooommm

A thunderous sound shook the house.

Bwwwoooooooommm...

Bwwwoooooooommm...

Tommy jumped up from the couch and opened the front door. The sound was blaring all over town.

One of the pizza boxes was shaken off the table. Then it moved.

Tommy's eyes were fixed on the box. It moved again. There was something inside. He walked over to the box and lifted the top with his shoe.

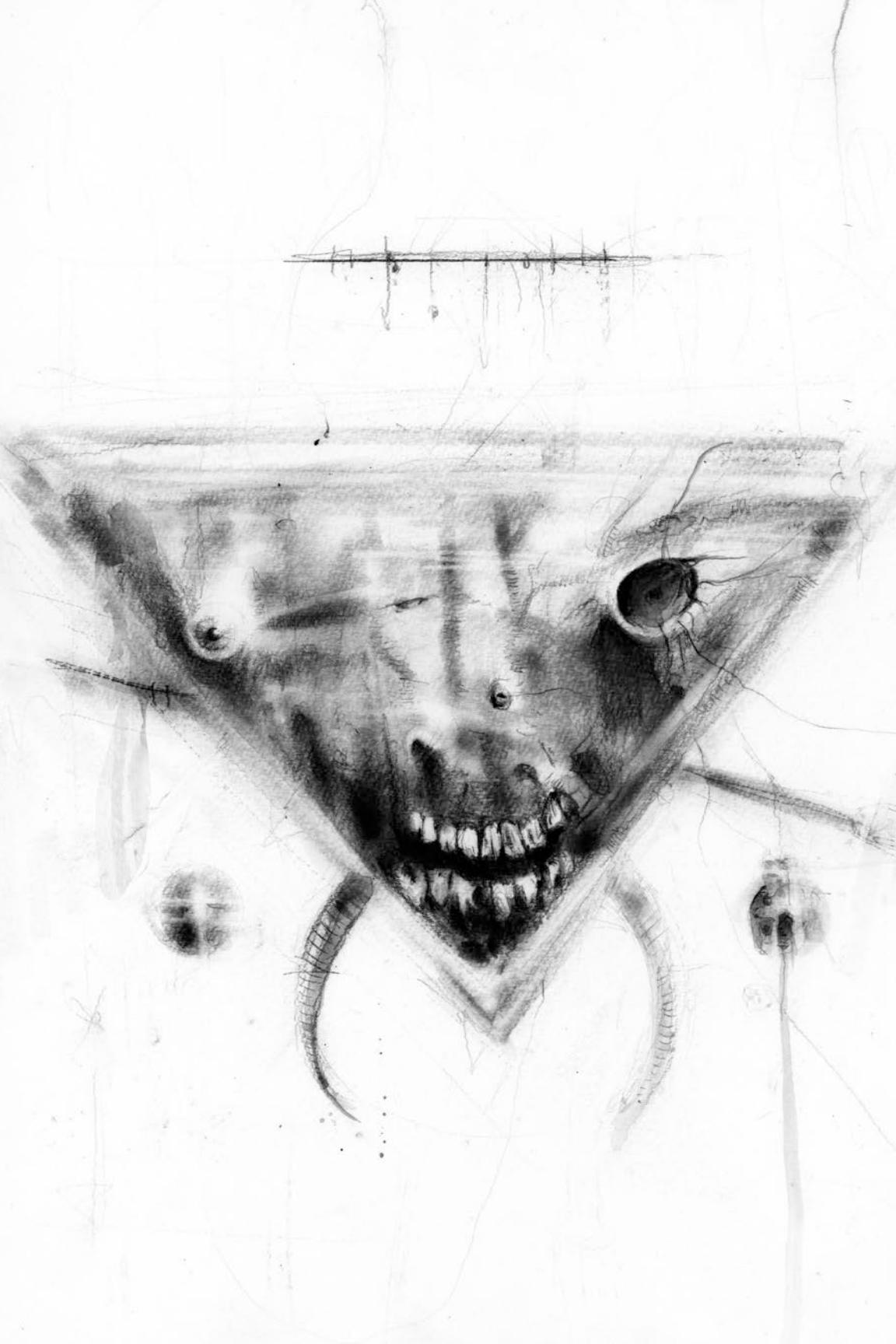
A piece of pizza slithered out like a slug. It flipped over, revealing tiny black eyes and a mouth full of small, needle-like teeth. It hissed at Tommy and bit his foot.

Tommy screamed and fell to the floor as more pizza slices crawled out of the box. He got up and ran to the door. Utter chaos had spread through the neighborhood like a pizza plague. People were running through the streets in droves. Pizza slices were latched onto them, feeding on their flesh.

The emergency broadcast system buzzed on the TV.

“This is not a drill. Take shelter immediately. Citizens are urged to stay away from all pizza or pizza related items. We repeat, this is not a drill.”

Tommy felt another slice crawl on his back and slither up his neck. It hissed into his ear and then devoured it like a piece of pepperoni.



## THE TASTE

“Have you ever wondered what human meat tastes like?”

The question caught Nicole off guard. “Uh... no, I haven’t, have you?”

Megan was glaring at her cheeseburger, watching the grease drip from the bun.

“Kind of. I mean, does it taste like chicken? Maybe roast beef?”

“Megan that’s disgusting.”

“What? I’m just curious.”

Megan took another bite of her burger. “So you’re telling me if it was right in front of you, and nobody would *ever* find out, you wouldn’t at least think about taking a nibble?”

“Considering I’m not a cannibal, no I wouldn’t.”

Megan shrugged her shoulders and finished the rest of her lunch.

Later that night, Megan opened a can of baked beans and started cooking them on the stove.

Once they were ready, she poured them out onto her plate. It was the perfect side dish for the leftover barbecue in the fridge.

Just as she took the first bite, she looked down and saw something strange. She used her fork to brush back some of the beans.

It was a human finger...

Megan dropped her fork and backed away from the table.

Was this real? She had heard stories in the news about severed fingers being found in food items, but she never thought she would find one in HER food.

She picked up the phone, wondering if this is something you call 911 for. But she paused.

She looked at the finger; it was fat and pudgy, and it was cooked perfectly in the beans, much like a sausage or hot dog.

Nobody would know, and she had always wondered.

Megan sat back down, stuck her fork into the finger, and took a big fleshy bite.

It was absolutely delicious.



# NIGHTMARE SOUP

TALES THAT WILL TURN YOUR STOMACH

